



Boston University School of Public Health Doctor of Public Health Program



[DrPH Program Guidelines](#)

2026 - 2027

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DrPH Program Contacts

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To schedule a 20-minute Zoom meeting with me: <https://calendly.com/jessicaleibler>

DrPH Program Administration

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We endeavor to respond to all student emails, calls, and messages within 24 hours. Please ping us again if you do not receive a response in this timeframe. For quickest response and for informal and short communication, please use the DrPH Slack page. All students are included on the program Slack page.

Boston University Policy Statement

Boston University and the Boston University School of Public Health reserve the right to change the policies, curricula, or any other matter in this handbook without prior notice. Students will be notified of major changes as soon as practicable once decided.

Contact Information

	Office & Contact Info
Course Materials	Online: Course information, assignments, and syllabi are often posted on a course webpage at learn.bu.edu . Course Readers and Textbooks are available for purchase through Barnes & Noble bookstore located at 660 Beacon Street, Kenmore Square, Boston University
Career Services	Office of Career Services: www.bu.edu/sph/careers/ Talbot Building 2 nd Floor East
Financial Assistance	Office of Student Financial Services: www.bumc.bu.edu/osfs/contact-us/ Email: osfs-sph@bu.edu Phone: 617-358-6550

Housing	Office of Housing Resources: www.bumc.bu.edu/ohr/ Email: OHR@bu.edu
Library Resources	Alumni Medical Library: medlib.bu.edu L Building, 12 th Floor Phone: 617-358-4810 Boston University Library Network: www.bu.edu/library
Parking and Transportation	Office of Parking and Transportation Services: www.bumc.bu.edu/parking/ 710 Albany Street Phone: 617-638-4915
Registration Information	Registrar's Office: www.bu.edu/sph/students/advising-and-registration/ Talbot 2 nd Floor Central Email: sphreg@bu.edu Phone: 617-358-3434 Compliance, Registration and Unofficial transcripts are available at https://student.bu.edu/
Student Health Behavioral Medicine	Student Health Services: www.bu.edu/shs/ 881 Commonwealth Avenue 617-353-3575
Student Services	Office of Graduate Student Life: www.bu.edu/sph/students/student-services/ Talbot 2 nd Floor East Email: sphgsl@bu.edu Phone: 617-358-1750
Disability and Access Services	Office of Disability and Access Services: bu.edu/disability Email: access@bu.edu Phone: 617-353-3658
International Students And Scholars Office (ISSO)	Contact Information: //www.bu.edu/isso/ 888 Commonwealth Avenue, 2 nd Floor Boston, MA 02215 Email: isso@bu.edu Advisor-on-Call: https://www.bu.edu/isso/contact/isso-advisor-on-call-for-student/
Additional Student Resources	Academic Support: https://www.bu.edu/sph/students/student-services/student-resources/academic-support/ SPH Courses and Bulletin: https://www.bu.edu/academics/sph/courses/

Important Dates throughout the Academic Year

Boston University School of Public Health (BUSPH), like other schools & programs on the Medical Campus, maintains its own academic calendar distinct from the Charles River Campus. It is important that students always refer to the BUSPH registration packets, academic calendar, and websites for SPH-specific information.

Academic calendar: <https://www.bu.edu/sph/students/advising-and-registration/academic-calendar/>

Academic class dates: <https://www.bu.edu/sph/students/advising-and-registration/academic-calendar/course-meeting-dates/>

Graduation and dissertation deadlines: <https://www.bu.edu/sph/students/advising-and-registration/graduation/graduation-procedures-for-ms-doctoral-students/>

Doctoral Graduation Calendar Deadlines			
Graduation Award Date	January 2027	May 2027	August 2027
Graduation Application submitted to Registrar by	June 1, 2026	Nov 1, 2026	March 1, 2027
Dissertation Abstract and Form to DrPH@bu.edu	At least 30 days prior to defense		
Dissertation Defense held by	Nov 15, 2026	April 15, 2027	July 15, 2027
Dissertation submitted to Library by	Nov 30, 2026	April 30, 2027	July 31, 2027

Withdrawal and tuition refund schedule: <https://www.bu.edu/reg/calendars/refund/>. A withdrawal means dropping ALL classes at the University. Students must complete a withdrawal form (forms are available online at <https://www.bu.edu/sph/students/advising-and-registration/policies-and-procedures/forms/>).

Withdrawal and Tuition Refund Schedule	
Prior to first day of class	100% refund of tuition and fees
During the first two weeks of the semester	80% refund of tuition only
During the third week of the semester	60% refund of tuition only
During the fourth week of the semester	40% refund of tuition only
During the fifth week of the semester	20% refund of tuition only
After the fifth week of the semester	0% refund

Boston University Policy on Religious Holidays

The BU School of Public Health, in scheduling classes on religious or government holidays, intends that students observing these holidays be given ample opportunity to make up work.

Emergency Cancellation Information

In the event of an emergency or class cancellation, email messages will also be sent to faculty, staff and students in the event of closings. Do not rely on information about the Charles River Campus or Boston University; the Boston University Medical Campus has different closing policies from the Charles River Campus. Instructors are required to reschedule cancelled classes; students will be notified by the instructor of make-up dates for any cancelled classes.

September 2026

Dear DrPH Students:

Welcome to the DrPH program at the Boston University School of Public Health (BUSPH)! You are joining an accomplished group of public health practitioners who are pursuing doctoral studies to enhance their leadership, management, research and policy skills. Our students tackle key challenges in public health with intellect, expertise, and commitment, and we have every confidence that you will do the same. We are thrilled to have you join our DrPH community.

As we move towards the fall semester, please plan to meet with your assigned academic advisor in the coming weeks to discuss your courses and activities for the coming year. I also encourage you to get to know SPH faculty and to take time to engage with faculty whose work overlaps with your interests and may be a resource for dissertation projects and support. Caitlin Brand and Isabel Brennan provide administrative support for our program and are key resources as you navigate the coming years, especially around course registration, finances, and program requirements and deadlines. I am, of course, also eager to support you as you move forward through our program and I look forward to getting to know you.

The DrPH Student Guidebook was developed to help you navigate your doctoral program. Please review the guidebook carefully as it provides key information about the program's policies, procedures, and resources. We will also keep an updated version of all forms on the DrPH student website:

<https://www.bu.edu/sph/students/sph-student-dashboard/my-academic-program/drph/>

The next several semesters will be extremely busy ones, but I encourage you to take advantage of the strong commitment of BUSPH to an activist public health agenda with regular seminars, presentations, podcasts, and activities. There is also a wide array of cultural, historic, and artistic attractions that make Boston a unique and beautiful city and BU a special and impactful university.

I am delighted that you have decided to join our program. The faculty and staff at BUSPH are committed to making this the best practice-focused DrPH program in the world. Welcome to the DrPH Program!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "JHL", written in a cursive style.

Jessica H. Leibler, DrPH, MS
DrPH Program Director
Associate Professor of Environmental Health

Section 1: Introduction and Program Overview

Purpose of this Handbook

This handbook is designed to assist students as they navigate their Doctor of Public Health studies at the Boston University School of Public Health (BUSPH). It comprehensively discusses the DrPH requirements, addresses the processes that need to be followed to meet the requirements, and provides reference links for more information to be found online. All students in the program are responsible for understanding the program requirements outlined here.

To supplement this handbook, there is an internal student website which can be found here:

<https://www.bu.edu/sph/education/degrees-and-programs/doctor-of-public-health-drph/drph/>.

Please note: This Handbook presents requirements for students matriculating in the program in Fall 2026. Additionally, this Handbook includes modifications to the comprehensive exam, dissertation proposal, and dissertation activities that are available to all students in the DrPH program, regardless of year of matriculation. Standing students may opt-in to revised program requirements or maintain alignment with the version of the Handbook from their year of matriculation, in discussion and agreement with their Dissertation Chair. Students should consult with Dr. Leibler if they are unsure of the requirements applicable to them.

Goal of the DrPH Program

The BUSPH DrPH Program trains public health professionals to assess and analyze public health problems and to develop, implement, and evaluate public health programs and policies, both domestically and internationally. The focus of this program is to prepare experienced professionals for advanced practice and leadership positions in public health. The practice-oriented nature of the DrPH Program fits ideally with the BUSPH mission, which is to train professionals who are equipped to meet the service and health needs of disadvantaged, underserved, and vulnerable populations in the United States and abroad. The practice of public health is a broad, multidisciplinary undertaking incorporating the contributions of many academic disciplines into the analysis of solutions to public health problems. Public health leaders require an understanding of the organizational, social, behavioral, legal, and bureaucratic complexities involved in resolving public health problems. This program's goal is to provide DrPH students with the interdisciplinary expertise needed to address current public health challenges.

DrPH Foundational Competencies

The DrPH is the professional doctoral degree in public health, designed to produce transformative academic and practice leaders with expertise in evidence-based public health practice and research. Students will address their skills aligned with program competences during the spring leadership seminar, the practicum, and during the dissertation process. These foundational competencies are developed by the Council on Education for Public Health (CEPH) and are consistent across all accredited DrPH programs:

Leadership, Management, and Government Competencies
Propose strategies for health improvement and elimination of health inequities by organizing partners, including researchers, practitioners, community leaders and others.
Communicate public health science to diverse audiences, including individuals at all levels of health literacy, for purposes of influencing behavior and policies.
Integrate knowledge, approaches, methods, values and potential contributions from multiple professions and systems in addressing public health problems.
Create a strategic plan.
Facilitate shared decision making through negotiation and consensus-building methods.
Create organizational change strategies.
Propose strategies to promote inclusion within public health programs, policies and systems.
Assess one's own strengths and weaknesses in leadership capacities, including cultural proficiency.
Propose human, fiscal and other resources to achieve a strategic goal.
Cultivate new resources and revenue streams to achieve a strategic goal.
Apply relevant ethical, legal, and human rights principles to difficult and controversial public health decision-making.
Apply lean management tools and techniques to resolve operational problems and enact sustainable change.
Data and Analysis Competencies
Explain qualitative, quantitative, mixed methods and policy analysis research and evaluation methods to address health issues at multiple (individual, group, organization, community and population) levels.
Design a qualitative, quantitative, mixed methods, policy analysis or evaluation project to address a public health issue.
Explain the use and limitations of surveillance systems and national surveys in assessing, monitoring and evaluating policies and programs and to address a population's health.
Develop a fully integrated evaluation of a program or policy that incorporates a plan for both outcome and process evaluation.
Policy and Programs
Design a system-level intervention to address a public health issue.
Integrate community-informed knowledge such as cultural values and practices in the design of public health policies and programs.
Integrate scientific information, legal and regulatory approaches, ethical frameworks and varied parties' interests in policy development and analysis.
Propose interprofessional/ intersectoral team approaches to improving public health.
Develop evidence-based strategies for changing health law and policy.
Develop financial and business plans for health programs and services.
Education and Workforce Development Competencies
Assess an audience's knowledge and learning needs.
Deliver training or educational experiences that promote learning in academic, organizational or community settings.
Use best practice modalities in pedagogical practices.

Student Advising

At the start of the DrPH program, students will be assigned to a faculty academic advisor to provide guidance regarding academic progress, the DrPH practicum, considerations regarding the dissertation portfolio, and strategies for developing and nurturing a mentorship network. Students are also provided advising and guidance by the DrPH Program Director and program administrators. In the second semester of the program, students will develop an individualized mentorship plan to enhance their personal mentorship and academic network. Into the second and third years of the program, students transition from academic mentorship to dissertation mentorship, as they identify a Chair for their dissertation portfolio (described later in this document) and initiate their dissertation work. Dr. Leibler will discuss advising and mentorship with students starting in the first year.

DrPH Timeline

The curriculum and program requirements described in this handbook apply to students matriculating in Fall 2026. The 48-credit DrPH program must be completed within 7 years, but students are strongly encouraged to plan to complete the program in 3-4 years to maintain steady progress and cost-effectiveness. The timeline and dates presented here are firm deadlines. Students who fall behind the program deadlines may face academic probation and dismissal from the program. A brief overview of the program timeline is provided below for reference.

DrPH Timeline

Coursework	• Completion of PH700: Foundations of Public Health within the first semester of matriculation • Completion of 40 required degree credits and 8 elective credits (48 total credits) • Note: Coursework to be completed within 3 years for all students
Practicum	• 150+ hours on-site and completion of program deliverables (learning contract, competency self-assessment, practicum deliverables, supervisor evaluation) • Can begin the practicum after one semester of coursework • Note: Practicum to be completed within 3 years of matriculation (usually Summer after Y1 or Y2)
Comprehensive Exam	• After completion of coursework, students prepare and sit for the Comprehensive Exam • Students register for continuing study status • Note: To be completed within 3 years of matriculation; full-time students take the exam after 3 full-time semesters (Y2)
Dissertation Preparation	• Identify Dissertation Chair (full-time, primary SPH faculty member) • Identify Dissertation Committee members
Dissertation Summary and Prospectus	• Develop and submit Dissertation Summary • Completion of written dissertation prospectus (8-10 pages) • Review Meeting with Dissertation Committee • Note: To be completed within one semester following Comprehensive Exam
Dissertation Defense	• Completion of written dissertation + oral defense • Closely consider Registrar's deadlines for defense and graduation dates and tuition payments • Note: Must be completed within 7 years; expected within 4 years • Graduation application to Registrar in semester prior to defense, considering Registrar deadlines
Dissertation Approval	• Final approval from Dissertation Committee and collection of signatures • Library submission of dissertation by required date
Graduation	• Commencement • Celebration!

Section 2: DrPH Coursework

DrPH Prerequisites

DrPH students have generally completed an MPH degree prior to matriculating. Students who have not completed an MPH may be asked to complete prerequisite courses to gain key public health competencies necessary for the DrPH coursework. Students will be informed of any prerequisites when they are admitted to the program, and these requirements must be completed within the first year of matriculation. All students are expected to demonstrate current competency in biostatistics and epidemiology to keep pace with the required methods courses. Additional training is not required if students have passed a course in these topics within the past 5 years of matriculation or use related skills regularly in a professional context.

Note: DrPH students are encouraged to use [the curricular Excel template](#) provided by the program when discussing their coursework with DrPH program leadership or faculty.

DrPH Course Requirements (40 required credits + 8 electives = 48 credits total)

Please note: *The Program Director may substitute or adjust course requirements as needed due to course availability in a given semester or year.*

- PH 700: Foundations of Public Health (0)*
- PH 842: Research Theory and Design (2)
- PH 844: Introduction to Qualitative Analysis for Public Health and Health Services Research (2)
- PH 851: Needs Assessment (4)
- PH 853: Strategic Planning and Communications (4)
- PH 854: Program and Policy Evaluation (4)
- PH 856: Law and Ethics for Public Health Leaders (2)
- PH 857: Health Economics and Financial Management for Public Health (4)
- PH 859: Cases in Public Health Management (2)
- PH 867: Evidence-Based Policy and Budgeting (4)**
- PH 871: Communication Skills for Public Health Leaders (1)
- PH 872: Mentorship and Coaching in Public Health Leadership (1)**
- PH 873: Data-Driven Decision-Making for Public Health Leaders (1)**
- PH 874: Public Health Practice within Political Contexts (1)
- PM 835: Lean Management in Healthcare (4)
- PM 839: Implementation Science: Linking Research to Practice (4)
- PH 986: Doctor of Public Health Practicum (0)***
- Elective courses (8)

* Students who completed their MPH degree at BUSPH and have taken PH700 already may waive PH700; please contact Caitlin Brand to discuss.

**Courses will not be offered in 2026/2027; Dr. Leibler will discuss course substitutions with incoming and standing students.

***Students must register for the 0-credit practicum to complete the requirement.

Elective Courses

In addition to the core course requirements, students complete 8 credits of elective coursework. These courses are intended to support methodological development or content-area expertise in areas of relevance to the student's dissertation portfolio. Students can choose elective courses in areas that interest them and are welcome to discuss options with their academic advisor or Dr. Leibler, but do not need pre-approval for elective courses. Students are encouraged to consider SPH courses at the 800 level (doctoral level).

Typical Course Cycle: Full-Time Students

Full-time students typically take three semesters of full-time classes (16 credits) during Year 1 and the first semester of Year 2 to complete 48 credits for the program.

YEAR 1: 31-37 credit hours

Semester	Course Title	Credit Hours
Fall:	PH 700 Foundations of Public Health (online)	(0)
	PH 842 Research Theory and Design	(2)
	PH 844 Introduction to Qualitative Analysis for Public Health	(2)
	PH 851 Needs Assessment	(4)
	PH 857 Health Economics and Financial Management for Public Health	(4)
	Electives	(4-6)
Spring:	PH 853 Strategic Planning and Communications	(4)
	PH 856 Law and Ethics for Public Health Leaders	(2)
	PM 839 Implementation Science	(4)
	PH 867 Evidence-Based Budgeting and Policy	(4)
	PH 871 Communication Skills for Public Health Leaders	(1)
	PH 872 Mentorship and Coaching in Public Health Leadership	(1)
	PH 873 Data-Driven Decision-Making for Public Health Leaders	(1)
Summer:	PH986 Public Health Leadership Practicum	(0)

YEAR 2: 13-17 credit hours (followed by Continuing Study in Spring Semester)

Semester	Course Title	Credit Hours
Fall:	PH 854 Program and Policy Evaluation	(4)

PH 859 Cases in Public Health Management	(2)
PM 835 Lean Management	(4)
Electives	(2-4)

Spring: Comprehensive Examination

PH 874 Public Health Practice within Political Contexts	(1)
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Dissertation Portfolio Summary and Prospectus

PH 990 Continuing Study* (payment for equivalent of 2 credits)	(0)
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YEAR 3-4: PH 990 Continuing Study*

Dissertation Portfolio Activities

Final Dissertation Defense

*Note: Students who have completed their coursework must submit a [Continuing Student Status Form](https://www.bu.edu/sph/students/advising-and-registration/policies-and-procedures/forms/) (available at <https://www.bu.edu/sph/students/advising-and-registration/policies-and-procedures/forms/>) to the SPH Registrar, who will register them for PH 990 automatically every fall and spring semester until they graduate. This zero-credit course is equivalent to the cost of 2 credits and allows students to maintain active student status.

Course Cycle: Part Time Students

Part-time students typically take 4-8 credits per semester of coursework during Years 1-3 of the program to reach 48 credits required for the program, including coursework in the summer.

YEAR 1: 20-22 credit hours

Semester	Course Title	Credit Hours
Fall:	PH 700 Foundations of Public Health (online)	(0)
	PH 851 Needs Assessment	(4)
	PH 857 Health Economics and Financial Management for Public Health	(4)
	PH 871 Communication Skills for Public Health Leaders	(1)
	Electives	(0-2)
Spring:	PH 853 Managing and Implementing Public Health Programs	(4)
	PH 856 Health Law and Ethics for Public Health Leaders	(2)
	PM 839 Implementation Science: Linking Research to Practice	(4)
	PH 873 Data-Driven Decision-Making for Public Health Leaders	(1)

YEAR 2: 17-20 credit hours

Semester	Course Title	Credit Hours
Fall:	PH 842 Research Theory and Design	(2)
	PH 844 Introduction to Qualitative Analysis for Public Health	(2)
	PH 854 Program and Policy Evaluation	(4)

	Electives	(0-2)
Spring:	PH 867 Evidence-Based Budgeting and Policy	(4)
	PM 835 Lean Management in Healthcare	(4)
	PH 872 Mentorship and Coaching in Public Health Leadership	(1)
	Electives	(0-2)
Spring, Summer, or Fall:		
	PH 986 DrPH Practicum	(0)

YEAR 3: 5-11 credit hours

Semester	Course Title	Credit Hours
Fall:	PH 859 Cases in Public Health Management	(2)
	Electives	(0-8)
Spring:	Comprehensive Examination	
	Any remaining elective credits	
	PH 874 Public Health Practice within Political Contexts	(1)
	Dissertation Portfolio Summary and Prospectus	
	PH 990 Continuing Study* (payment for equivalent of 2 credits)	(0)

YEAR 4-5:

PH 990 Continuing Study*
Dissertation Portfolio Activities
Final Dissertation Defense

***Note:** Students who have completed their coursework must submit a [Continuing Student Status Form](https://www.bu.edu/sph/students/advising-and-registration/policies-and-procedures/forms/) (available at <https://www.bu.edu/sph/students/advising-and-registration/policies-and-procedures/forms/>) to the SPH Registrar, who will register them for PH 990 automatically every fall and spring semester until they graduate. This zero-credit course is equivalent to the cost of 2 credits and allows students to maintain active student status.

Transfer Credit and Course Waiver

In certain cases, students may request to transfer or waive required courses. The full policy can be found here: <https://www.bu.edu/academics/sph/policies/transfer-credit-and-course-waiver/>, with key items outlined below. **There is a maximum number of 8 credits that can be transferred outside of BUSPH to count towards the DrPH degree.** This includes courses taken at other schools within Boston University.

- Students who have their MPH from SPH cannot obtain transfer credits for the DrPH program. However, students with an MPH from SPH can waive program required courses for more advanced courses if they have already taken required courses within the last 5 years.

- The student must gain written approval for the course from the DrPH Program Director for course waiver or transfers by using the Transfer Credit/Waiver request form found here: <https://www.bu.edu/sph/students/advising-and-registration/policies-and-procedures/forms/>
- The student must provide the SPH Registrar with the completed Request for Transfer Credit or Course Waiver Form, along with a course description, syllabus, reading list, official transcript, and any other materials requested by the department designee or the SPH Registrar
- A request for transfer credit must be approved by the SPH Registrar.
- Students who waive a course typically register for a more advanced course in a similar or adjacent topic to continue their learning.

Continuing Study

“Continuing Study” is the period of time after students complete their course requirements during which they are working on their comprehensive exam and dissertation portfolio. Students must register for Continuing Study with the Registrar during this period. All students are responsible to ensuring that they maintain active registration for each semester during the DrPH program.

- All DrPH students who have completed their required coursework and practicum apply for continuing student status by submitting a [Continuing Student Status Form](#) to the SPH Registrar.
- This requirement applies to students who are preparing to take the comprehensive exam and all students who have reached the dissertation stage and are working on their dissertation.
- Upon receipt of this form, the SPH Registrar will register continuing DrPH students for **PH 990** (a zero-credit course equivalent in tuition cost to 2 credits) each fall and spring semester until they graduate.
- All students must be enrolled either in coursework or continuing student throughout the full program.
- **Of note:** Students who are BU employees **will not receive tuition remission** for continuing studies credits, due to University policy. Additionally, DrPH tuition scholarships cannot be applied to continuing study fees.

Students do not need to submit the continuing study form each semester, but rather only if they are making changes to their status (e.g., taking a leave of absence or returning from one).

Section 3: DrPH Practicum

Practicum Overview

The DrPH public health practicum provides an opportunity for students to apply key elements of policy, management, and program analysis to an advanced-level collaboration with public health practitioners. The practicum emphasizes the linkages between practice and research and highlights their integrated value through the application of rigorous public health science towards public health practice.

Practicum details:

- The practicum has a minimum requirement of 160 hours (typically 4 consecutive weeks for full-time students). Practicum activities can be in-person, remote, or hybrid, with in-person activities encouraged as feasible. Students may spend significantly more than 160 hours on their practicum activities; if this is the case, please identify and complete program deliverables at 160 hours.
- Students may find BUSPH Career and Practicum Office useful in identifying a practicum: <https://www.bu.edu/sph/careers/>. They are also welcome to use their own network or that of their advisor in identifying a placement.
- Students may conduct paid or unpaid practica. We encourage students to engage in paid activities, if possible, although limitations on work hours for international students may complicate efforts to receive payment.
- Full-time students are expected to complete the practicum in the first summer of their academic studies. Part-time students may complete it during their second or third year in the program with greater flexibility, based on schedule.
- Students must register for **PH986** (0 credits) for the practicum in the semester in which they intend to engage in practicum activities. The practicum is graded pass/fail.
- Students must complete at least one semester of coursework before initiating their practicum.
- The practicum must be completed within the first three years of matriculation for all students.
- All students must complete the practicum and submit all required deliverables prior to taking the comprehensive exam.
- Students must submit a learning contract prior initiating the practicum. At the end of the practicum, students submit a final competency self-assessment, practicum deliverables, supervisor's evaluation, and brief written summary and reflection. These activities are due at the end of the semester in which the student is enrolled for PH986.
- Students must select a minimum one of the DrPH leadership-oriented competencies (1, 4-7, 9, 10, or 13) to demonstrate engagement with at least of these key leadership domains during the practicum. These competencies are included in the Learning Contract.

Choice of Organization and Field Supervisor

Students are encouraged to choose an organization or institution that will provide them with a set of experiences that will broaden their exposure to public health practice settings and enhance their skill set. Students may choose to work with an organization they have identified (in consultation with their academic advisor and the DrPH Program Director), choose from the opportunities available through the SPH Career and Practice office, or work with the DrPH Program Director to identify a suitable

opportunity. Students may consider a practicum within the organization in which they current work so long as the practicum activity is not part of their job responsibilities and the practicum supervisor is not a current or previous supervisor.

Students must identify a field supervisor who is an advanced-level public health practitioner capable of providing substantive contact, mentorship, and access to leadership during the practicum experience. Field supervisors may take a variety of approaches to mentoring DrPH candidates, including reserving time for weekly on-on-one meetings, facilitating access to high-level organizational meetings, and providing opportunities for on-the-job shadowing. The mentoring activities that the field supervisor and DrPH candidate agree to must be reflected in the candidate's practicum learning contract.

Students may complete their practicum in any country and setting of their choosing but are strongly advised to strategically investigate skills and settings that will position them well for dissertation projects and advance their career objectives.

Students are encouraged to reach out to the SPH Career and Practicum Office for 1:1 meetings with career counselors to support their practicum selections.

Students may find the [DrPH Practicum Description for Site Supervisors](#) helpful to send to prospective field supervisors.

Practicum Learning Contract

When students have identified a practicum site, and know the name and contact information for their field supervisor, they will draft the learning contract. A copy can be found [here](#).

The practicum learning contract should include the details of the practicum experience, including:

1. Learning objectives (see description below) that describe the specific competencies that they hope to enhance during the practicum and how working in the practicum will address them
2. A description of clearly defined practicum experience tasks, responsibilities, deliverables, and expectations. **Practicum deliverables should demonstrate the application of advanced public health knowledge and leadership skills at a doctoral level.** Examples of doctoral-level practicum activities include:
 - Conducting an impact evaluation of a program that they implement in multiple centers throughout a large urban center
 - Undertaking a cost-effectiveness study of a program that the organization wants to scale up but is unsure if it is worth it
 - Developing a quality improvement plan applying lean management principle to some operational component of the organization
 - Analyzing current guidelines for care in the country and determining if, and how they should be revised based on the current state of the art
 - Proposing a revised implementation program based on a recent evaluation.

Activities in which students engage, participate, or support ongoing activities are not sufficient for the DrPH practicum. Students must demonstrate initiative and advanced knowledge and skills application for the practicum. Please reach out to Dr. Leibler if you are unsure whether your intended activities are at an advanced level.

3. A detailed timeline describing the schedule of hours they will commit to the practicum and approximate range/s of time devoted to particular practicum tasks or responsibilities.

After completing the learning contract, students send it to their field supervisor and then to Dr. Leibler and drph@bu.edu for approval. Students should also provide their field supervisor a copy of requirements and the competencies worksheet and the field supervisor evaluation form that they will complete at the end of the practicum.

Tips for Writing Learning Objectives

Learning objectives form the basis of the Learning Contract and represent measurable statements of the results the student wishes to achieve. A learning objective is a concise statement of a change in competency, skill, knowledge, or understanding the student plans to gain. They give insight to why the student is doing the practicum. It is important to define the level of mastery that will be obtained when defining the outcome, e.g., identifying an issue vs. analyzing the issue, listing problems vs. evaluating problems. The methods and activities should then describe the detail of the student's work and how the learning objectives will be obtained.

To ensure that your learning objectives align with a doctoral level of work, we encourage students to refrain from utilizing verbs such as "support", "contribute", "engage" or "participate" and instead frame their activities from the perspective of project or idea development, initiation, leadership, and/or generation.

Linking the Practicum to DrPH Competencies

In conjunction with a field supervisor and their advisor, students will compare their leadership competencies at the time they initiate the practicum to the broader, pre-identified set of such competencies they completed in the DrPH Leadership Seminar and listed in this Guidebook. Reviewing and reassessing competencies allows the student to think of the upcoming practicum in terms of objectives, activities, resources and outcomes. Based on this comparison they will develop a list of the competencies they wish to develop/enhance in their practicum and include those in the learning contract. Students must choose five DrPH competencies to address during their practicum, at least one of which must be related to leadership and management.

Deliverables at the Completion of the DrPH Practicum

In addition to project-specific deliverables agreed upon by the student and site supervisor, students will complete 4 deliverables to complete the practicum activity. These deliverables are due at the end of the semester during which the student is registered for the practicum.

Before the final day of the registered semester, students should email the following to Dr. Leibler and drph@bu.edu:

1. **Final summary and reflection memo.** Students must provide a written summary and reflection memo (2 double-spaced pages) outlining their accomplishments during the practicum, including activities, deliverables, and key collaborators. Students are asked to reflect on how their field experience and classroom preparation have impacted their assessment of the selected leadership competencies. This summary must include a description of how students met their leadership competency learning objectives through specific deliverables, ongoing projects, and/or responsibilities. Students are also asked to reflect on the practicum experience and opportunities for program improvement.
2. **Practicum deliverables.** Students must submit their full portfolio of deliverables or products associated with their practicum to the program for review. These deliverables will not be shared outside of the program without the student's permission. *Please note that descriptions of the deliverables (PPTs, memos, notes) are not acceptable; students must share full practicum deliverables for faculty review.*
3. **Competency self-Assessment:** Students complete a [self-assessment form](#).
4. **Field supervisor evaluation:** Students must have their field supervisor complete a [final written evaluation](#) and email to DrPH@bu.edu.

DrPH Practicum Assessment

The practicum is reviewed by a faculty committee engaged in review of practica and internship activities across SPH. The review uses the rubric below.

Criterion	Meets Expectations (Pass)	Does Not Meet Expectations (Fail)
Description of deliverables	Clearly identifies all practice-based products developed during the practicum (e.g., briefs, reports, evaluations, toolkits). Provides sufficient description of each deliverable to demonstrate scope and relevance.	Products are missing, vague, inadequately described, or do not demonstrate doctoral level competency.
Alignment with 5 DrPH competencies	Explicitly maps each product to the 5 selected DrPH competencies. Provides a clear explanation of how the product demonstrates achievement of each competency.	Competencies not mapped, incomplete, or links between products and competencies are superficial or absent.
Advanced context and role	Provides clear description of the public health issue or organizational needs addressed. Explains their role in developing the product(s) and identifies the intended audience or use.	Context missing or unclear. Student role is vague, or audience/use not specified.
Impact and leadership	Thoughtfully reflects on how the products contributed to the host site, community, or population. Discusses personal growth in leadership, scholarship, and practice.	Minimal or generic reflection. No clear evidence of impact on organization/community or of student's leadership development.

High-level collaborations	Provides specific examples of collaborations with public health practitioners or leaders. Describes lessons learned in navigating partnerships, communication, or decision-making.	Little or no discussion of collaboration. No examples provided.
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For International Students: Curricular Practical Training (CPT) Guidance

[Curricular Practical Training](#) or CPT, is a type of work authorization during a student's program of study. This type of work authorization must be required for academic credit or as a requirement to complete the program of study. Please keep in mind that this practical training authorization is also for unpaid practical training requirements that are required for program completion including off-campus dissertation research. As CPT is directly tied to course registration, you must first be registered in the appropriate practical training course for the terms during which you are requesting authorization. This course is [SPH PH 986](#).

Please keep in mind that all off-campus work and practical training opportunities require authorization and endorsement from the International Students & Scholars Office (ISSO) first. Working without authorization would result in termination of your immigration record for unauthorized employment. The ISSO recommends that you first familiarize yourself with our related [Curricular Practical Training](#) ISSO webpage as it outlines this type of training in great detail. Included on this page are the criteria that you must meet to be eligible as well as instructions on how to apply for CPT.

After determining your eligibility and finding a practicum or dissertation research experience that is required for your program, you must send your [ISSO advisor](#) your [most recent I-94](#), offer letter, and [CPT Acknowledgement form](#) completed and signed by your department's internship coordinator or advisor. The specifics for what should be included on the offer letter can be found under section 3 of the CPT Acknowledgement form. The ISSO requires a processing time of 10 business days for CPT authorization requests.

Section 4: DrPH Comprehensive Examination

Upon successful completion of coursework and practicum, each student will take a comprehensive exam that will require the student to address a real-world public health problem using knowledge and skills acquired in the classroom. Students must complete their Comprehensive Exam within 4 years of matriculation. The exam is a case-based written assessment in which students respond in short essay form to a series of questions. Students will have 4 hours to complete the exam. The exam will be offered twice per year, at the end of the Fall and Spring semesters. Exams will be graded by faculty members of the DrPH Committee. The exam will be open book and open note. Students are encouraged to prepare for the exam in groups by reviewing their course notes together in the months leading up to the exam. The Comprehensive Exam is an individual exercise for which the use of generative AI is prohibited for the written response to exam questions.

Students will be informed of the outcome of their examinations within two weeks. Students can receive a grade of pass, conditional pass, or fail for the exam. Students who receive a conditional pass may be required to take additional coursework or conduct additional learning around specified topics. Students who fail the examination will receive a written report explaining the reason for their failure. Students will have two chances to pass the comprehensive exam. Failure to pass the comprehensive exams after a second attempt will result in Academic Dismissal.

Students will be evaluated based on their ability to:

- Apply relevant principles and theoretical approaches to a specific public health situation.
 - Describe the problem and examine the contextual factors and legal and ethical considerations that would be considered to assess the problem and develop a solution.
- Integrate multiple resources and types of data to define and address the case.
 - Assess data quality and associated measurement issues to determine the level of priority for the problem at hand.
 - Identify alternative approaches to addressing the problem and explain how they were prioritized, leading to the choice of a favored approach.
- Combine various components of their response into a persuasively communicated plan
 - Create and justify a plan to develop and implement a response, including cost considerations, to the problem as defined.
 - Develop a plan for evaluation to determine if the program being proposed was successful.
 - Communicate conclusions in an integrated and effective plan to public health officials.
- Thoughtfully summarize the strengths and weaknesses of the proposal to address the case.
 - Identify challenges that would be faced in developing and implementing this solution. How could these challenges be overcome?
- Effectively contextualize the proposed plan into existing political realities and anticipated political implications using language relevant to a policymaker

Section 5: Applied Dissertation Portfolio (ADP)

Through independent work conducted under the guidance of a Dissertation Committee, each DrPH candidate will complete an Applied Dissertation Portfolio addressing a significant, practice-based public health problem. The dissertation portfolio must demonstrate the candidate's ability to use evidence to inform action and make a substantial contribution to public health practice. Dissertation portfolio work may be conducted in partnership with health departments, healthcare, community-based, or nongovernmental organizations, or other public health institutions in the United States or internationally. The work must respond to an identified organizational or community need and use primary or secondary data as evidence to advance a practice goal. Candidates must consider the relevance of their findings to the immediate practice setting and their potential application in other settings.

Although working in collaboration with other public health professionals, students are expected to take intellectual and functional leadership through the development and implementation of their dissertation portfolio and serve as the lead author and lead developer of all manuscripts and products.

At the end of the program, students are encouraged to share their full dissertation portfolios in a Google Drive with a link on their CV; the dissertation submission provides students the opportunity to copyright their dissertation work.

Required deliverables

The Applied Dissertation Portfolio includes three substantial, doctoral-level deliverables:

1. **One publishable manuscript.** The manuscript must present an original, evidence-based analysis suitable for submission to a peer-reviewed public health journal. The student is expected to be the lead author.
2. **One advanced public health practice product,** with accompanying narrative for intention and relevance, application, analysis, and sustainability.
3. **A second advanced public health practice product,** with accompanying narrative for intention and relevance, application, analysis, and sustainability.

These deliverables are combined into a written dissertation that is submitted to the BU Library upon completion of the dissertation defense to represent the completion of the DrPH degree. Details are below.

The two practice products must be distinct, ready for use by their intended audiences, and appropriate to the complexity of the public health problem. Depending on the dissertation portfolio topic, advanced public health products may include the following examples:

- an intervention or program design;
- a program or policy evaluation;

- a strategic or implementation plan;
- a decision-making or assessment tool;
- a policy analysis or economic analysis;
- a professional toolkit or set of educational materials;
- a communications or dissemination strategy; or
- another substantial product, as approved by the Dissertation Committee.

A product such as a policy brief, educational resource, or communications plan must have sufficient scope, analytic depth, and practical utility to constitute doctoral-level work. The student's Dissertation Committee, in consultation as needed with the Program Director, will determine whether each proposed product meets this standard.

Students may prepare additional manuscripts or adapt either practice product for publication beyond the one required for the dissertation portfolio. Additional manuscripts are optional and do not replace the requirement for two practice-oriented products.

Translation, implementation, and sustainability:

Each dissertation practice product must be accompanied by an analytic narrative explaining:

- the evidence and data that informed the product;
- the organizational or community need it addresses;
- the intended users and plans for dissemination;
- potential pathways, facilitators, and barriers to implementation;
- the applicability of the work to other populations or practice settings; and
- the resources, financing, policy context, and organizational conditions relevant to sustainability or scale-up.

These considerations are incorporated into the dissertation portfolio chapters and synthesized in the concluding chapter.

Dissertation portfolio organization:

The final dissertation portfolio will generally include five chapters:

1. **Introduction:** Public health problem, literature review and assessment, practice context, and dissertation objectives
2. **Publishable manuscript**
3. **First public health practice product and accompanying analytic narrative**
4. **Second public health practice product and accompanying analytic narrative**
5. **Integrated conclusions:** Contributions to practice, relationships among the three deliverables, transferability, and implications for future action

Competency synthesis and assessment: Each student must select at least five foundational DrPH competencies in consultation with the Dissertation Chair and Committee. The selected competencies should span relevant areas of advanced practice, such as leadership, management, systems thinking, policy, data analysis, and evaluation.

Each of the three required deliverables must integrate multiple competencies. Students will document this integration in a competency alignment matrix submitted with the dissertation proposal.

Competency synthesis will be assessed through review of the portfolio, the competency matrix, the dissertation evaluation rubric, and the student's oral defense.

Dissertation Competency Mapping

Description	Competencies addressed	How competencies are synthesized	Assessment of competency synthesis
The DrPH dissertation addresses a significant, practice-based public health challenge. Each dissertation includes three deliverables: one publishable manuscript and two practice-oriented products (e.g., policy briefs, program evaluations, strategic plans, toolkits). Deliverables must be evidence-based, responsive to an organizational or community need, and demonstrate advanced public health leadership.	Students select at least 5 foundational DrPH competencies, identified in consultation with their advisor and committee. These competencies are identified in the Dissertation Summary, which is shared with the Program Director. Selected competencies typically span multiple domains, such as: • systems thinking • leadership and management • policy development and evaluation • data analysis/evaluation • workforce development	Each dissertation deliverable must integrate multiple competencies within a single product. For example, a program evaluation may combine data analysis (Competency #2), strategic management (Competency #7), and workforce training (Competency #13). This integration mirrors the complexity of senior-level practice, where competencies are applied together rather than in isolation.	Synthesis is assessed through: Competency Mapping: Students complete a competency alignment matrix at the proposal and defense stages, demonstrating how multiple competencies are integrated in each deliverable. Committee Review: Dissertation committees evaluate the extent to which deliverables demonstrate integration across domains, not just isolated competency achievement. Evaluation Rubric: Faculty use a rubric requiring evidence of synthesis (integration of analytic, leadership, policy, and management skills). Oral defense: Students must articulate how their deliverables synthesize competencies to address a real-world public health challenge.

Formation of Dissertation Committee

Each student must identify a faculty advisor to serve as Dissertation Chair. Once appointed, the Chair becomes the student's primary faculty advisor for the dissertation and works with the student to identify the other committee members. Students may reference [program guidance on outreach to potential Chairs](#).

The Dissertation Committee consists of a minimum of three members:

- **Dissertation Chair.** The Chair provides primary supervision throughout the dissertation process and must hold a primary appointment at BUSPH. The student and Chair should establish a regular meeting schedule and must meet at least once each month while the student is actively working on the dissertation. The Chair must be a full-time, primary faculty member at BUSPH.
- **SPH Faculty Reader.** One additional member must hold a primary faculty appointment at BUSPH. This member should provide relevant methodological or substantive expertise.
- **External Practice Reader.** One member must be a public health practitioner from outside Boston University who holds a leadership role and has expertise relevant to the dissertation. The Practice Reader evaluates the relevance, feasibility, and potential utility of the work for public health practice.

A fourth committee member may be added at the discretion of the Student or Chair when expertise not represented on the three-person committee is necessary for oversight of the dissertation. Students can also gain support from other faculty and external advisors in informal capacities, as needed.

The full committee must participate in approval of the dissertation proposal, review of the final portfolio, and the oral defense. The committee is expected to meet together with the student at least twice annually during the dissertation process to monitor progress and provide guidance.

Please note: Students should begin exploring dissertation topics and potential Dissertation Chairs during their first year, with the goal of having identified a Chair prior to the start of the proposal seminar (PH874). Finding a chair involves learning about SPH faculty members' work, developing relationships, and identifying areas of shared interest. These relationships can take time to develop. Students who do not identify a Dissertation Chair and topic within the required timeframes may be subject to dismissal from the program.

Students are independently responsible for developing a feasible dissertation topic that has strong faculty support. Projects aligned with a faculty member's ongoing or funded work often provide a strong foundation and mutual benefit to the student and Chair. Projects outside the expertise or current work of SPH faculty may be difficult to support.

Dissertation Portfolio Summary and Prospectus

Students will prepare for their dissertation portfolio project in PH874, which is a 1-credit seminar focused on supporting students move through the dissertation prospectus process. Students will take this seminar and complete the Dissertation Portfolio Summary and Prospectus during the semester immediately following the Comprehensive Examination, typically in the spring semester of their 2nd or 3rd year. These two activities constitute the dissertation proposal and are stages of a single planning process. Students are expected to complete the full prospectus process within the PH874 semester. *Upon enrolling in PH874, students are expected to have identified a Chair for their dissertation portfolio.*

Stage 1: Dissertation Portfolio Summary

At the start of PH874, students will complete a brief online Dissertation Summary in collaboration with the Dissertation Chair. A full committee is encouraged but not required at this stage.

In the Summary, the student will identify:

- the public health problem and practice setting;
- the questions posed by the dissertation;
- the proposed manuscript and two practice products;
- the anticipated data sources and methods;
- the intended users or beneficiaries of the work;
- the feasibility of obtaining the necessary data, permissions, and organizational support;
- proposed committee members; and
- a preliminary timeline.

The Dissertation Chair must approve the Summary before submission. The Program Director will also review it for feasibility and alignment with DrPH requirements. Students should continue developing the Prospectus while this review is underway.

Stage 2: Dissertation Portfolio Prospectus

The student will then expand the approved Summary into a concise Dissertation Prospectus. The Prospectus must be completed and reviewed by the student's full Dissertation Committee before the end of the same semester.

The Prospectus should be 8-10 double-spaced pages, excluding references and appendices, and include the following sections:

1. Public health problem and significance

Describe the public health problem, the population and practice setting, the organizational or community need, and the gap the dissertation will address. Summarize the most relevant literature and explain why the proposed work is important to public health practice.

2. Portfolio objectives and deliverables

State the overall purpose of the dissertation and the objectives or questions guiding the work. Include a portfolio planning matrix describing the three required deliverables:

Deliverable	Purpose or question	Evidence or data	Methods	Intended audience and professional application
Publishable manuscript				
Practice product 1				
Practice product 2				

The matrix should demonstrate how the deliverables are related and how each contributes to addressing the public health problem.

3. Evidence, data, and methods

Describe the data sources, evidence, practice frameworks, and analytic or developmental methods that will be used. Organize this section by deliverable. Include enough detail for the committee to assess the rigor and feasibility of the proposed work. Identify important limitations and explain how they will be addressed.

4. Translation to public health practice

Explain how the findings and products are expected to influence public health programs, policies, systems, or practice. Identify the intended users, plans for dissemination or implementation, and factors that may affect transferability or sustainability. Identify the DrPH competencies that will be integrated across the portfolio.

5. Feasibility and work plan

Confirm access to the data, practice setting, collaborators, and other resources needed to complete the dissertation. Identify required human subjects, data-use, or organizational approvals and their current status. Provide a timeline for completing each deliverable, meeting with the Chair and Committee, and defending the dissertation. Note: Students are advised to scrutinize timelines associated with any data access agreements or IRB protocols so as to maintain feasibility of their project.

Stage 3: Dissertation Prospectus Review Meeting

The student will submit the Prospectus to their Dissertation Committee at least ten business days before the review meeting, which must be attended (in person or virtually) by all Committee members. The student will give a brief presentation of the proposed work (20 minutes), followed by a discussion and question and answer session with the Committee (40-60 minutes). The goal of the Review Meeting is to determine whether the student is ready to initiate their portfolio work. *The Review Meeting must be held before the end of the semester in which the student is enrolled in PH874.*

At the end of the review meeting, the Committee may:

- approve the Prospectus as-is;

- approve it with minor revisions to be verified by the Dissertation Chair; or
- require substantive revisions and additional committee review.

A second Review Meeting may be required if the Committee determines that the proposed work has changed substantially or that major concerns remain unresolved.

Following the review meeting, the Dissertation Chair will inform Dr. Leibler as to the Committee's decision, and the student will submit the final Prospectus to the DrPH Program at drph@bu.edu. The approved Prospectus will guide the dissertation, although modifications may be made with the approval of the Dissertation Chair and Committee.

Dissertation Progress Updates

Every student will submit a written progress update on the current status of their work and timeline once per academic year. These updates are required annually by BUSPH. The program administrator will reach out to every student annually to provide information as to their progress, challenges, and timelines. Additionally, the Program Director meets twice annually with dissertation students in a group meeting to discuss progress, brainstorm problem-solving activities as needed, and provide support. The Program Director welcomes 1:1 meetings with dissertation students through her Calendly link at any time to discuss issues relevant to their progress.

Dissertation Defense

It is expected that throughout the writing of their dissertation, students will share drafts of each chapter with their committee for review and feedback. This back-and-forth is imperative for successful completion of the dissertation and a high-quality written product. Students must manage their own timeline to ensure committee members have mutually agreed upon time to review and provide feedback throughout.

The Dissertation Committee must have seen the full written dissertation draft at least once for feedback and revision before the student submits their final draft and advances to the defense. As students approach the end of their dissertation and anticipate graduation, they must follow the timeline outlined below and regular communication with their Dissertation Committee is required.

Students are required to submit their written, final dissertation to their Committee at least 30 days before their scheduled defense date.

Upon completion of the written public health practice dissertation, students will make an in-person oral defense summarizing the key elements of the dissertation and its population-based policy and practice implications to their Dissertation Committee. This requirement, to be conducted in an appropriate public forum, will demonstrate students' ability to present the integration and application of public health practice scholarship and skills required to solve complex public health problems in an appropriate, realistic, and proactive way. Students will be responsible for making changes to the written

dissertation based on comments received at the oral presentation—and all such revisions must be made by the dissertation submission deadline set by the University library—though it is expected that most or all of these concerns will be resolved prior to the oral presentation.

Final Assessment/Approval

Based on the written and oral presentations, the Doctoral Dissertation Committee will formally vote to recommend approval or disapproval of the public health practice dissertation. The vote must be unanimous for the dissertation to be approved. The assessment of the dissertation will be based on the degree to which it makes a substantial contribution to the existing public health practice knowledge base and its alignment with DrPH program competencies.

There are 4 steps to fully completing the dissertation process:

- 1) The Dissertation Chair completes the [DrPH Dissertation Assessment Rubric](#) and send to Dr. Leibler and DrPH@bu.edu within one week of the oral dissertation defense.
- 2) Students finalize their dissertation, including any comments from their committee following their oral defense, within one month of their defense, ensuring that their final submission meets school-wide deadlines for graduation (see below for submission requirements to the library).
- 3) Students request and confirm receipt of the Readers' Approval Page through SPH, using DocuSign: <https://www.bu.edu/library/sph-dissertations-docusign/>
- 4) Students must send a final email to DrPH@bu.edu to notify the program when they have submitted their final dissertation and signatures to the library. Students must attach a copy of their final dissertation in this e-mail as well.

Preparation and Submission of Final Dissertation

After the successful dissertation defense, the student will incorporate the corrections that the Dissertation Committee require before they submit their dissertation electronically to the Mugar Memorial Library via the ProQuestETD site (<http://www.etdadmin.com>) by the deadline listed in the [Doctoral Graduation Calendar](#). Students have up to one month after their defense to prepare any final revisions required by their Dissertation Committee, obtain the final approval of the Dissertation Committee, and submit the final document to the Library.

There are Boston University requirements for the style, electronic submission, distribution, and other aspects of the dissertation which can be found in "Research Guide for Writers of Theses and Dissertations," available here: https://library.bu.edu/ld.php?content_id=30310050. Students must work with the BU Library Staff to ensure formatting is suitable for BU standards; the DrPH program staff are not involved in dissertation formatting and publication. Students with questions about formatting or the dissertation submission process can contact Brendan McDermott, Thesis and Dissertation Librarian at the Mugar Memorial Library, at brendan@bu.edu. Mr. McDermott has requested that students send him an electronic copy of their dissertation draft well in advance of the date when they would like to submit their final draft to give him ample time to assess their dissertation's adherence to Boston University formatting requirements. There is a charge for library services for handling the thesis.

Section 6: Student Policies and Forms

Below are policies and resources related to the DrPH program at BUSPH. All of the student forms printed in this section are also available as editable forms on the student website:

<https://www.bu.edu/sph/education/degrees-and-programs/doctor-of-public-health-drph/drph/>. All Registrar forms (Substitution, Course Waiver, Add/Drop, etc.) can be found on the Registrar's website: <https://www.bu.edu/sph/students/advising-and-registration/forms/>

Academic Accommodations

Students may seek and obtain academic accommodations through the University-wide Disability and Access Services: <https://www.bu.edu/disability/>. Accommodations are granted through DAS only and not through BUSPH specifically, the DrPH Program Director, or through individual faculty or advisors. Students can contact Ms. Mary Murphy Phillips at BUSPH for further information about the process to request and manage academic accommodations. (mcmurph@bu.edu). Students are advised to request accommodations early in their tenure, as it may take many months to complete the process.

Annual Doctoral Progress Report

Each year, all BUSPH doctoral students are required to complete an annual progress report. This collects information valuable for accreditation and collects meaningful information on student progress in the program and upcoming goals. This is required for each student at all stages of the degree and is usually distributed during the late spring/early summer. It is a great opportunity for students to connect with their advisor on their plan for the upcoming academic year.

Academic Standing

All SPH degree candidates must earn a minimum 3.0 GPA each semester to be in good academic standing and must have a minimum 3.0 GPA at SPH to graduate. Please see the BUSPH Grading Policy at <https://www.bu.edu/academics/sph/policies/grades/>.

A DrPH student is expected to maintain good academic standing in each semester, including meeting all deadlines for completion of program activities at the required pace and timelines as outlined in this Guidebook. SPH policies involving academic standing are outlined here: <https://www.bu.edu/academics/sph/policies/academic-standing/>.

Academic warning: Students who fail to achieve academic requirements or adhere to program deadlines for milestones (practicum, comprehensive exam, proposal activities, dissertation completion) will be placed on an academic warning status. Students on warning status will be required to meet with the Program Director and develop a learning plan that will get them back on track within a short period of time (one semester or less).

Academic probation: Students who fail to accomplish their goals while on warning status will be placed on academic probation. When a student is placed on probation, the DrPH Program Director will send the student a letter specifying the reason(s) for probation, what is required to be removed from probation,

and the deadline by which the requirement(s) must be met. After the student has fulfilled the relevant requirement(s), they must write a letter to the DrPH Program Director that describes their completion of each step. The DrPH Program Director will respond in writing with a determination of whether the student (A) has met the requirements and has been removed from probation status or (B) has not met the requirements and will remain on probation.

Dismissal: A student who is on probation will be dismissed from the DrPH program if they do not demonstrate substantial progress during the probationary period, or do not meet the requirement(s) of probation by the deadlines specified. A student who fails the comprehensive examination two times, fails to maintain the minimum GPA or commits an act of academic dishonesty, as defined in the School's policy on Academic Honesty, will be dismissed from the program.

A student who does not meet the established time limits for completion of program milestones may be dismissed from the program without a degree. Additionally, students who fail to complete the program within 5 years as a full-time student or 7 years as a part-time student are subject to dismissal, per Boston University policy on timeline for doctoral students.

All decisions regarding academic standing, probation, and dismissal will be made by DrPH Program Director, the SPH Dean of Education, and the SPH Registrar. Decisions are final.

Boston University Information Regarding Academic Honesty

Academic honesty is essential for students to attain the competencies the University and School expect of graduates, and any action by a student that subverts these goals seriously undermines the integrity of the educational programs at the School. Students at the Boston University School of Public Health are expected to adhere to the highest standards of academic honesty

<https://www.bu.edu/academics/policies/academic-conduct-code/>.

Dispute Resolution Process

A concern or complaint from a SPH student should be directed to the persons whose actions or inactions have given rise to the concern or complaint. Whenever possible, every effort should be made to resolve the problem promptly at the level at which it occurred. The student may pursue the issue within the normal reporting structure of the academic or administrative department at SPH. If a student feels they have been unfairly treated by an instructor or teaching assistant of a SPH course, the student should contact the chair (or his/her designee) of the department in which course is taught. If the chair is the instructor, the student should seek assistance from the Associate Dean for Education. Should the student need additional assistance, they may also see staff in the Boston University Office of the Ombuds: <https://www.bu.edu/ombuds/>.

Grievance Process

Boston University prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, creed, religion, ethnic origin, age, sex, [disability](#), sexual orientation, gender identity, or other unlawful basis. The goal of the procedures

outlined below is to ensure that non-discrimination is a reality at Boston University and that no person in the University community is subjected to such unlawful conduct. All members of the University community can assist in the furtherance of this goal by ensuring that complaints of discrimination are promptly directed to the departments or individuals who have been designated to receive them, in accordance with these procedures. <https://www.bu.edu/academics/policies/student-grievance-procedure-in-cases-of-alleged-disability-discrimination/>

Registration Requirements

Consistent Registration and Continuing Study

At Boston University School of Public Health, all doctoral students, regardless of citizenship or immigration status, must register each fall and spring semester during their doctoral program until they graduate, or risk being administratively withdrawn from their doctoral program.

International students holding F-1 or J-1 non-immigrant status and who are in residence at Boston University must meet the requirements of their visa, in particular full-time enrollment. Full-time enrollment is achieved by registration for 12 or more credits of academic coursework, or by registering for Continuing Study with additional full-time certification (“Certified Full-time”) coding by the SPH Registrar. International, non-immigrant students must check in at the Boston University International Students and Scholars Office (ISSO) when they first arrive at Boston University and then complete “Semester Verification” in each subsequent semester to ensure that they remain in lawful status. Students who are not full-time by virtue of academic course load (12 credits or more) or who are not certified full time by enrolling in continuing study will be considered in violation of their immigration status. Students who violate their status are subject to the penalties prescribed in relevant immigration laws.

Students who are permanent residents or United States citizens must meet the requirements of their program and must register for either coursework or Continuing Study each fall and spring semester.

Leaves of Absence

In exceptional circumstances, a student may need to take a leave of absence from the program. A student may request a leave of absence of up to two semesters by writing a letter to the DrPH Program Director and the BUSPH Registrar. Students on leave of absence are not entitled to be advised officially by their advisors or meet with their Doctoral Dissertation Committee during a leave of absence, nor do they have library privileges. Students must petition the Registrar for a third leave of absence, with the notice that such leaves are typically not extended.

International students must have approval of ISSO to take a leave of absence and must work with ISSO when they are ready to return to their studies.

For more information regarding Boston University’s Parental Leave Policy, [please follow this link](#)

International Students and International Work

International Students and Scholars Office (ISSO)

The ISSO provides professional expertise on immigration and employment issues to students, faculty, and staff at Boston University. Some additional resources include:

- International Travel Risk Policy: <http://www.bu.edu/policies/international-travel-risk>
- Maintaining F-1 Status: <https://www.bu.edu/isso/students/status/>
- International Student Employment: <https://www.bu.edu/isso/administrators/advising-current-students/work/>
- SPH ISSO Representative: Peter Buschkopf (pbusch@bu.edu)

For practicum work authorization guidance, please see “Curricular Practical Training (CPT) Guidance for International Students” in Section 3.